



Anne McCaffrey at Aussiecon II in 1985

Issue XXIII - Dec/Jan 2010

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Musings from Under the Mountain

I did promise to tell you a bit about my personal history of science fiction, and yet, with Anne McCaffrey leaving us for that dragonhold beyond the sky, I really should be talking about her life and influence on the genre. But I can do both, because McCaffrey had her greatest impact on the development of science fiction right about when I was growing up. You see, it was back in 1968 while I was still at Intermediate School that she won her Hugo for “Weyr Search”.

It was in the library of that Intermediate School that I discovered science fiction—at least in the written form. (I’d been watching Doctor Who since I was six years old. I don’t remember if I saw the very first episode or not, but I do know that “Web Planet” gave me nightmares back in 1965, which didn’t stop me loving it). That library had the Heinlein juveniles, titles like “Red Planet” and “Farmer in the Sky” and a number of Andre Norton’s books for teens like “Beastmaster” and “Lord of Thunder”, and I read them many times.

From the Intermediate School library on to the local Children’s Library, the High School library and then the bookstores the habit had to be fed, and among the first novels in my book collection was “Dragonflight” published in 1968, followed soon by “Dragonquest”, “The White Dragon” and for some strange reason, “Dragonsinger” before “Dragonsong”. Needless to say, they were all well read, several times over. It has to be admitted that there wasn’t that much SF published back then (nor as much as I’d like now, that truly qualifies as science fiction—but that’s another editorial).

What McCaffrey did that was different, was to write about real people in a science fiction setting who were rounded characters, not the robotic cut-outs who populated the very masculine science fiction of the 40’s and 50’s. Her characters even had emotions, and hearts as well as brains. She had heroines—just what a certain teenage girl needed. She practically invented what I generally term as “soft” science fiction—where while the underlying science is workable, but does not dominate the story as it does in “hard” science fiction. This is distinct from science fantasy where the science can be a bit dubious (“It’s the ship that made the Kessel run in less than 12 parsecs.” anyone?). She paved the way into science fiction for many a woman writer and we owe her a great debt. We will miss the lady, but her dragons will remain, for yet another generation to discover.

Jacqui

The View from the Cosy Armchair

Sunflowers. Yep, that’s right. Sunflowers. The ones I planted a few months back in an old recycling bin on our main deck, have finally borne flowers. The red ones (Moulin Rouge) bloomed before Christmas while the yellow ones (King Kong) have finally



began to open. The main reason they’re flowering at different times is that the red ones had a head start as they were grown from small plants purchased at the nursery while the yellow ones came from seed.

Sunflowers need a lot of watering so I discovered, and it’s easy to tell when they need it, as the leaves look flaccid while the flowers droop. None of the other plants seem to need that much water and sometimes not even the recent showers will satisfy them. I’d be interested if anyone has any experiences they can share. Maybe we can start a gardening tips column in Novazine. Hopefully, in subsequent months, we’re going to have more flowers on the deck as I intend to plant more soon.

All the wet weather we’ve been having has definitely been causing the plants to grow, including the weeds, and also prevents us from doing anything about it. The back garden has been full of dock weed and the only way I know of getting rid of it is digging it out as the roots can regenerate and they go way deep.

Paul Scoone’s Retrospace store will have opened in Takapuna by the time you read this. Let’s hope it goes well. Let’s also hope that 2012 is an even better year than the last one. We’re talking about a Space at the Beach at the start of February and hopefully other interesting events as the year goes on. Remember, the crew is open to suggestions.

Keith
Stella Nova President

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A Readers' Guide to Anne McCaffrey

by Jacqui Smith

I'm going to write this guide as though I was writing for somebody who hadn't read any of McCaffrey's work, which I doubt is actually the case for any of you. Feel free to disagree, it's just my opinion.

So, where to begin?

I'd suggest you start with the "original" trilogy from the "Dragonriders of Pern" which are:

1. Dragonflight
2. Dragonquest
3. The White Dragon

If you enjoy those, then you'll probably like the "Harper Hall" trilogy, featuring Menolly and her fire lizards.

1. Dragonsong
2. Dragonsinger
3. Dragondrums

Beyond that, only "Dragonsdawn" which tells the story of the settling of Pern, is really worth reading, unless you're really into McCaffrey's dragons.

Outside of the Pern stories I'd definitely recommend "The Ship Who Sang" - the first of the Brainship series is much the best.

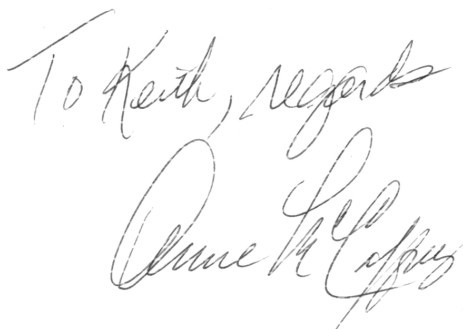
"The Crystal Singer" - the first Ballybran story.

"Get Off the Unicorn" - a short story collection worthwhile not only in its own right, but as a guide to which of her other series you might like. Thus, if you enjoy "The Thorns of Barevi" you should look into the "Catteni Sequence" and so on.

"To Ride Pegasus" - another short story collection, the first book about Daffyd op Owen and the North American Center for Parapsychic Talents.

Anne McCaffrey Quiz

1. Anne McCaffrey's first novel was published in 1967. What was its title?
2. The first of McCaffrey's Pern stories, "Weyr Search", won the 1968 Hugo Award for best novella. Which novel did it eventually become part of?
3. The "White Dragon", published in 1978, became the first science fiction book by a woman on "The New York Times Best Seller" list. Who was the White Dragon?
4. The dragons of Pern were genetically engineered to fight "Thread". Where does "Thread" originate?
5. The Pernese often consume "Klah". What is "Klah"?
6. Who is "The Ship who Sang"?
7. One of McCaffrey's best known characters, Killashandra, has an unusual occupation. What is it?
8. The "Acorna" series was written by McCaffrey with Margaret Ball and Elizabeth Ann Scarborough. Acorna is a alien who resembles a cross between a human and which mythological species?
9. The 1959 short story "The Lady in the Tower" was later expanded into a sequence of novels beginning with "The Rowan". What were the insectoid alien enemies plaguing humanity in this series?
10. Anne McCaffrey's works, especially the Pern stories, are now being continued by her son. What is his name?



Anne McCaffrey at Aussiecon

Two—with proof that Keith was there too, and did meet her (though it must have a mission getting film processed in time for her to sign the back of a print, back in 1985).



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Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

This is my homage to Anne McCaffrey—of course it's a Pern story, mainly because it's there I believe we find her best work. While it's not up to her standard, I'd like to think that it's better than a lot of the McCaffrey fan-fiction out there on the web. And I hope you like it too.

A Dragon in Silver

by Jacqui Smith

High in the sky the dragons danced, their sinuous bodies curving as they looped and dived. The browns and blues chased the greens, who acrobatically slipped in and out, tempting and teasing the eager males. Finally, a young bronze joined the flight, and with powerful wing-beats, captured the largest of the greens, twining his neck and body around hers as they mated. As if on cue the other greens allowed themselves to be caught and taken. Far below, a young boy watched in awe.

"Where is that dratted boy?" yelled the burly silversmith, standing in the door of the crafthold. Jonan was a big man, with a temper to match, but capable of surprisingly delicate work when it came to precious metals.

"Probably up hill again," called back his wife, Yolanda, who was in the kitchen, busy kneading bread for their supper.

"Dratted child, I was going to get him to take draybeast down to mine and bring back load of ore for smelting."

"Ah well, not as if he's much good with draybeast, is he?"

"Not with that gammy leg of his, he ain't. Not much use for anything, 'cept sitting up top of hill, watching for dragons, and dreaming of dragon riders."

"Let Toran have his dreams, Jonan. It's about all he's got, poor boy. Sheena's out in the garden, she can take draybeast to mine."

"Guess she can."

Jonan stomped off to the garden where his eldest child was weeding among the roots and tubers, with some of her cousins. Given the mindless drudgery of that task, she wasn't at all displeased to be required to drive the cart down to the mine where her uncles could be expected to have a load of ore waiting. At the very least it would be a change of scenery, and besides the draybeast actually liked her.

Toran sat on his favourite rock, his back against the side of the hill, his crutch lying in easy reach. From here he couldn't actually see the weyr entrance – it was miles away and on the wrong side of the mountain. But he could see dragons, and that was enough. Today a flight of greens and browns were practicing flying in formation, led by a bronze. He watched entranced, as they flew intricate patterns across the cloud-dappled sky. A while later, they flew back to the weyr, and then a small group emerged, riderless, flitting across the hills, clearly hunting for food. A single green female peeled off, and flew towards the hill where Toran watched. Not having any desire to be dragon dinner, Toran grabbed his crutch and hid among the rocks, still keeping a wary eye on the green. But she wasn't interested in him.

She settled among the boulders perhaps three or four

hundred yards from where Toran sat frozen in a mixture of apprehension and awe. Now he was closer to a dragon than he'd ever been before, and he wasn't so sure he liked it. Especially when she opened her mouth in a wide yawn, showing her large and very carnivorous teeth. She was large for a green – was she the one caught by the bronze in that mating flight months ago? Toran wasn't sure. She settled some more, and then, much to Toran's consternation and surprise, began to deposit a series of round ovoids in the nest she had made in the rocks. And then, when she was done, she flew off, apparently without a second thought.

Gingerly, Toran approached the nest. It was immediately evident that the green's lack of concern was justified. Instinct may have led her to make a rudimentary nest, but the eggs she had laid there were small and pale. If she had been a wherry, Toran would have been surprised if eggs that looked like that bothered to hatch, and he guessed it would be the same with dragons. Only one, the largest, had much colour at all, a dappling of greys and blues. Well, it certainly wasn't going to hatch there on the hillside, even if it was fertile, which was pretty unlikely, from all Toran knew about dragons. So Toran picked the egg up, awkwardly with the hand he wasn't using for his crutch, and sat down on a rock to tuck it inside his tunic, tying his belt so as to hold the egg safely while leaving his hands free. Good thing that freshly laid eggs had rubbery shells, and weren't likely to break. Then he made his way carefully down the hillside. He knew a great place to stash the egg, where it would be nice and warm.

That evening, after everyone had gone to sleep, Toran sneaked out of his bed. He tucked the egg under his shirt again arm, and snaffled some wherry meat from the kitchen. The meat satisfied the watch wher, and Toran was able to get to the smithy otherwise unobserved. Years ago when he was much younger, he'd discovered that although the fires were banked down for the night, it was still warmer in there than anywhere else in the crafthold. What's more, there was a loose tile, and a cavity behind it where he used to hide special things that he didn't want his sisters to find. He'd hatched a wherry egg inside once, and just hoped it was big enough for his dragon egg. Toran was relieved to find that his cubbyhole was still there, and when he cleared out the junk that his younger self had found important, there was just enough room. Good thing that eggs didn't grow.

Toran missed a lot of sleep over the next five sevendays, checking on his egg. He became more and more hopeful that, against all conventional wisdom, it was actually going to hatch. Maybe the mummy dragon hadn't chewed enough firestone... He did his best to avoid attracting the attention of his parents – they were pleasantly surprised at his good behaviour, and hoped this change for the better would last.

Finally, on the thirty-third night (according to the count Toran was keeping with a bit of chalk on the back of the loose tile) he saw that striations were forming across the top of the egg. With wherry eggs that generally meant they were about to hatch.

Uncorked

by Broderick Wells

Carefully Toran tucked the egg under his tunic, and hurried to the kitchen to gather some cold meats for the hungry hatchling he was hoping for. He stole back to the smithy, and there he spent the night, sleeping fitfully on the hard floor, cradling the egg in his arms.

Dawn cracked, sending red rays across the skies to the east of the crafthold, and a number of things happened more or less at once. Almost as if on cue, the egg in Toran's arms began to crack. A small nose poked out, mewling in hunger. Toran woke at the movement, blearily opening his eyes. They met another pair of eyes, whirling red with hunger. And that was all it took.

"His name is Sirenth," he cried out involuntarily, as he began shovelling meat into the open maw of the dragonet as fast as he possibly could. The dragonet was fully occupied, between eating voraciously, and clawing his way out of the remains of his shell. Toran noted, half-aware, that the juvenile dragon was a handsome light blue, with almost silvery highlights. Surely his father would like that... he half giggled, and sensed the dragonet's approval.



The door of the smithy opened, and there stood Toran's father. His eyes widened in surprise and shock. "Whose name...?" Jonan exclaimed. "What under the double moons is going on..." "He's mine, father," said Toran. "You won't have to worry about me any more." "But... he's a dragon. What are we going to do with a dragon?" "I'm going to ride him. You'll see." "But... you can't have... how..." Words stumbled out of Jonan's mouth in confusion. Somewhere outside, there was a crack of displaced air. The little blue dragon jumped. Then the door swung open again.

"In fact, he can, and apparently he has," stated a deep voice. The man at the door was tall and darkly handsome, and was wearing riding leathers. "Who the shells are you? And what makes this your business?" Jonan blurted, turning slowly. He stepped back, as he realised the identity of his visitor. "Weyrleader... I'm sorry... I don't know how this can have happened. The boy... my son... he is a cripple. He can't have stolen one of your eggs. But..." "He didn't. You can be assured of that. There is no clutch on our hatching ground. Where this egg came from, I do not know. But know this. Your son is no cripple. He is, or more accurately he will be, a dragon rider."

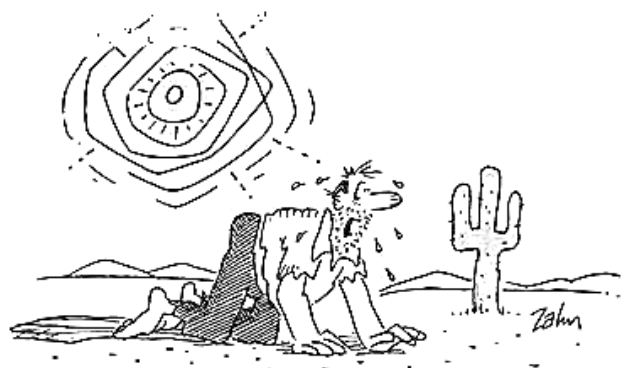
T'ran looked into his dragon's eyes, now spiralling deep blue with pleasure, and he knew it was true.

I could've sworn that yesterday was Christmas Eve. Turns out I was wrong; it was New Year's Eve. Just not in this neck of the woods. Never mind. *Tempis fugit* and all that. The year has started with a hiss and a roar, and Wells's Significant Other has insisted he obtain a new television. Thus the day has been spent sorting out cables, location of mounting points DVD inputs. All this before actually buying the device; but being a bloke I know how big it is. I'd have to hand in my man card if I didn't.

The early part of the season was spent reading through the literature given by various members of the family. My favourite one starts "Single Malt" and ends "Distilled in Scotland". I don't even mind getting repeat examples or exemplars with the same or similar plot. And it certainly beats the DVD version (I refuse to watch graphic evidence of someone else drinking **my** booze, unless it is for identification purposes). But I don't mind foreign literature of this style and "Produit de France" or "Producto en Espagna" are perfectly good reads. Of course, some of you will have been hanging out at that internet store known as big river Dorothy Com or maybe big river Dorothy Company Dorothy UK (Dorothy seems to be gaining in popularity as a name these days; either that or a lot of Dorothies have made it lucky). They've had some wonderful Boxing Day specials all week. Isn't it marvellous with this new technology – you can go to the Boxing Day Sales, miss the crowds, the elbowing and shoving and fighting over the best deals, and still get what you want. Amazing. I think I'll have a drink to celebrate.

Boxing Day Sales – anyhow, Auntie Pommie Dorothy had some wonderful sales and I took full advantage of the Super Saver postage thingy by selecting a few nifty but weighty articles (hardbacks). It really is a pity they don't mail order premium Scotch. But how much Duty Free can you import before the Revenue Men come knocking? I don't know if I want to answer that one.

And before you all die of boredom, Happy New Year and the best of the Season to you all. I'm off to install the new tellie. I think I'll need a stiff one when I'm finished.



"WATER! WATER! SCOTCH! WATER!"

The Sky at Night – January 2012

It may be said that Orion is the most recognisable constellation in the sky no matter which way up it is. You have three brightish stars in a row with four other bright stars making a frame around them. One of those stars, Rigel, is very bright and blue while the one in the opposite corner, Betelgeuse, is distinctly red. Since Orion is getting high overhead in the evenings it can be used to find other constellations. Follow the line of the belt towards the south and you'll find a very bright star. That is Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, and marks the position of one of Orion's hunting dogs, Canis Major. The other, Canis Minor, is marked by the star Procyon which forms a rough equilateral triangle with Betelgeuse and Sirius.

Going the other way along the belt, and roughly the same distance away as Sirius is Aldebaran, the brightest star in Taurus the Bull which the subject of this month's column. Aldebaran looks like it's part of a group of stars that form a V shape but that's an optical illusion as it's closer and just happens to lie in the same direction as seen from Earth. The rest of the V is an open cluster called the Hyades.

A bit to the west of the Hyades is a small cluster of stars. They are sometimes known as the Seven Sisters but some say that they can see six individual stars, while others say eight. Usually they are known as the Pleiades or to the Maori, Matariki and to the Japanese, Subaru. Through a telescope, one can see several blue young stars as well as traces of nebulosity. It was thought that this was the remains of the nebulosity that birthed them but it is now thought that it's just an unrelated patch that the cluster is passing through. Taurus also contains M1, the first Messier object, also known as the Crab Nebula. This is the remains of a supernova explosion.

I said that Sirius is the brightest star in the sky, but looking towards the west just after sunset, you will see two objects that are even brighter. These are not stars, but planets. The one nearest the horizon is brilliant Venus while the one higher up is Jupiter. Venus will set soon after the sun and Jupiter will set sometime before midnight. By then though Saturn will have risen in the east and Mars won't be too far behind it, in the constellations of Leo and Virgo respectively.

Turning south, the Southern Cross is low near the

horizon. Near overhead however stands out the bright star Canopus, called Autahi by the Maori meaning the Sacred Man (or Chief) that stands alone as it appears that the Milky Way is separating Canopus from the other bright stars. Canopus marks the constellation of Carina which contains objects such as the Eta Carina Nebula (NGC3372) and the Southern Pleiades (IC2602)

The Large Magellanic Cloud is just below Canopus. It looks like a small cloud but is actually a satellite galaxy of our own. Looking further south is a smaller cloud like object, the Small Magellanic Cloud. Near the SMC is the bright star Achernar, marking the end of the Eridanus River, which meanders it's way from near the feet of Orion south towards Achernar.

Events:

First Quarter Moon: 1st January

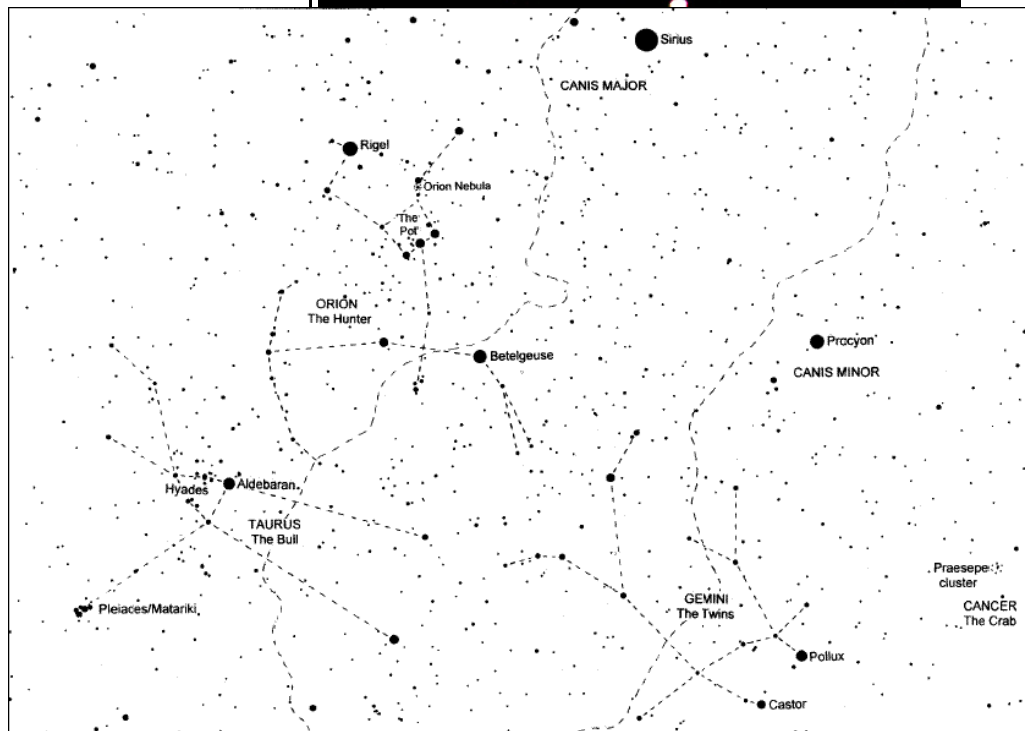
Full Moon: 9th January

Last Quarter Moon: 16th January

New Moon: 23rd January

First Quarter: 31st January

The Eta Carinids Meteor Show peaks on the 21st January.



by
Keith
Smith

Obituaries

November 15

John Hart, (aged 75),

English schoolmaster, taught classics at Malvern College, and became the first man to win Mastermind in 1975 (the first three winners were women).

November 18

Mark Hall, (aged 74),

British animator and television producer, who was the "Hall" in the British animation studio Cosgrove Hall, known for children's television programmes including "Danger Mouse" and "Count Duckula". They also adapted Terry Pratchett's novels "Truckers", "Wyrd Sisters" and "Soul Music" for television.

November 19

John Neville, (aged 86),

British-born Canadian actor who played the title role in "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen". He was also the Well-Manicured Man in the "X-Files" among others.



November 21

Anne McCaffrey, (aged 85),

American science fiction writer, Hugo and Nebula award winner, best known for the "Dragonriders of Pern" series, and for bringing heroines and romance into SF.

November 28

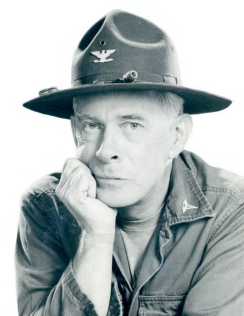
Charles T. Kowal, (aged 71),

American astronomer who found 2060 Chiron, the first of a new class of Solar System objects, the Centaurs—objects which orbit between Jupiter and Neptune and show characteristics of both asteroids and comets. He discovered two moons of the planet Jupiter, and various asteroids, comets and supernovae.

December 5

Darrell K. Sweet, (aged 77),

American fantasy artist and illustrator, who did the covers for Piers Anthony's Xanth series, for the L. E. Modesitt's "Saga of Recluse" and Jordan's "The Wheel of Time" (but we won't hold that against him) and many others. It's almost certain you've seen his work, and may well have some on your bookshelf. He was nominated for a professional artist Hugo in 1983. Ironically, he was to be the Artist GoH at the 2013 WorldCon which Keith and I plan to attend.



December 7

Harry Morgan, (aged 96),

American actor best known as Colonel Sherman T. Potter in "M*A*S*H" - but also played Officer Bill Gannon on Dragnet and numerous other roles.

Jerry Robinson, (aged 89),

American comic book artist who worked on DC Comics' Batman line of comics during the 1940s. He is best known as the creator of the Joker.

December 11

Susan Gordon, (aged 62),

American child actress who appeared in "The Five Pennies", and "My Three Sons". Her main genre role was as Jenny in The Twilight Zone episode "The Fugitive".



December 13

Russell Hoban, (aged 86)

London-based US-born writer of fantasy, science fiction, mainstream fiction, magic realism, poetry, and children's books—for which he is probably best known. "The Mouse and His Child" was made into an animated movie.

December 14

Joe Simon, (aged 98),

American comic book writer who co-created Captain America with his partner, artist Jack Kirby. They also worked on as the 1940s Sandman and Sandy the Golden Boy, and co-created the Newsboy Legion, the Boy Commandos, and Manhunter.

George Whitman, (aged 98),

American proprietor of the Shakespeare and Company bookstore in Paris, noted for his encouragement of young writers including Lawrence Durrell.

December 15

Emmett L. Bennett, Jr., (aged 93),

American classical scholar whose cataloging of Linear B (used for writing Mycenaean Greek, a 3,300-year-old script that was used hundreds of years before the Greek alphabet) led to its decipherment.

December 16

Dan Frazer, (aged 90),

American actor, best known for his role as Captain Frank McNeil, the former partner turned supervisor of Kojak.



December 18

Don Sharp, (aged 89),

Australian-born British film director, whose most famous films were made for Hammer Studios in the 1960s including "The Kiss of the Vampire" and "Rasputin, the Mad Monk".

December 30

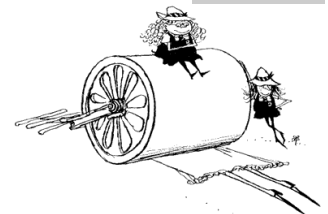
Rusty Hevelin, (aged 89),

American science fiction fanzine publisher (H-1661), Fan GoH at countless conventions and 1986 recipient of the Big Heart Award for service to the SF community.

December 30

Ronald Searle, (aged 91),

British artist and cartoonist, creator of "St Trinian's School", and "Molesworth". He had a distinctive and very recognisable style.



Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

So What are These Sir Julius Vogel Awards Anyway?

by Simon Litten

Every year since 2003 the Science Fiction and Fantasy Association of New Zealand (or SFFANZ if you will) runs a set of awards called the Sir Julius Vogel awards (the SJVs). The SJVs are a means for fans to recognise achievement in science fiction, fantasy and horror by New Zealanders and New Zealand residents. Yes, I know the SJVs started in 2002, but that was before SFFANZ was formed.

The awards are divided into two categories: professional, which simply put means the creator expected to make money from the activity; and fan, activity done for the love or enjoyment of the genre. The awards operate on an annual basis, so that the awards given in 2012 recognise activity in the 2011 calendar year. Quite simple really.

So who decides on what gets an award? And how do they choose the recipients anyway?

In sequence: members of SFFANZ and members of the annual national science fiction convention do by casting their votes (if someone is a member of both that person gets only one vote); and from works nominated by the public. This last really needs to be expanded.

The nomination process and who may nominate is very straight forward. Each year (generally from 1 January to 31 March, but not always) SFFANZ calls for nominations for the SJVs. Once the nomination period begins anyone may make a nomination – SFFANZ rules allow for natural persons (human beings or homo sapiens sapiens for the taxonomic minded) and bodies corporate (companies and incorporated societies, e.g. Phoenix Science Fiction Society Incorporated). The following may not nominate: the Crown (except as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth) or Parliament in their many guises as these are not “natural persons”, and unincorporated bodies e.g. Stella Nova. There is no requirement for the nominator to be of age, of sound mind, or even be a New Zealander, however, the nominator does need to be living. SFFANZ may be liberal minded as to who may nominate, but it is not so licentious as to allow zombies to have their halfpennith-worth. Nominations are free too, so one’s wallet is safe from intrusion. After the nomination period closes SFFANZ tallies the nominations for each work and within award category the highest polling nominees are listed.

So is there any restriction on what may be nominated?

Yes. The work has to be by a New Zealander or New Zealand resident, and be created in the year the awards are for. The New Zealander may be living offshore (many do you know, mostly in Australia) or more likely,

have published offshore – the awards are not so parochial as to require first publication within the Dominion of New Zealand.

For those wondering what [professional] works could be eligible SFFANZ maintains a set of listings on its website <http://sffanz.sf.org.nz/lists/lists.shtml> of works that SFFANZ is aware of. I must stress the words “aware of” as these lists are generated by fans providing details to SFFANZ and are quite likely to be incomplete; for example, there have been any number of radio plays with a strong science fiction/ fantasy/horror theme but getting details of these is difficult to say the least. As an aside I note from personal experience that I hear most radio plays when I am driving and for some odd reason find it difficult to locate pen and paper at the time the name of the play is announced – careless of me I know.

The category of the awards that is most likely to be unrepresentative of actual activity is the fan section. Fans are either not a creative bunch, taking a very passive interest in their hobby of choice (reading and/or watching the genre), or they love to keep their light under a bushel and not tell others about their creative endeavours. Whatever the reason there is a real paucity of nominated fan activity, which is not good for that category of the awards as it is in danger of withering on the vine.



So I shall end on an exhortation: Nominate! Nominate! Nominate! Especially for those fan awards and show the world that fans do more than wear costumes.

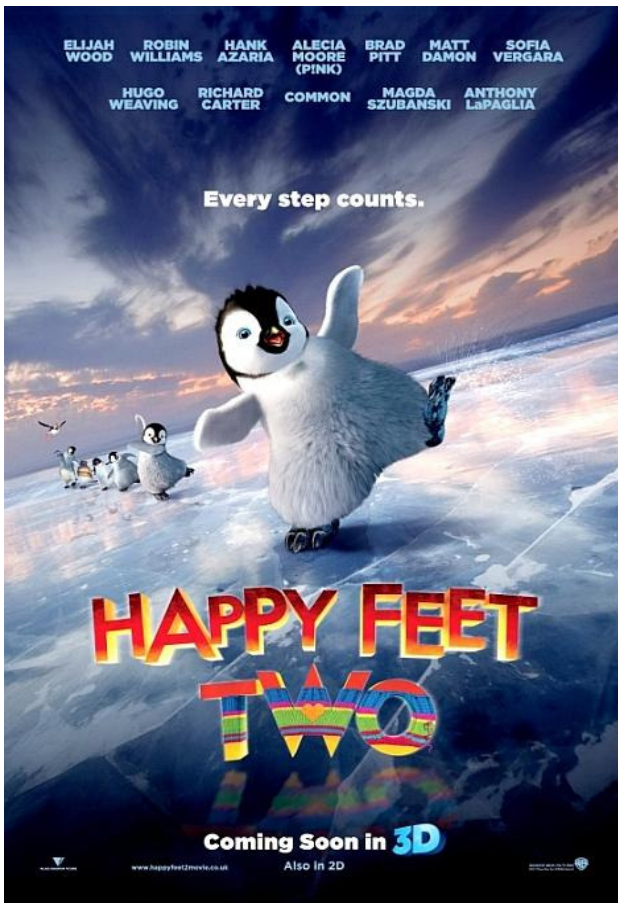
Disclaimer:

“Simon Litten is not a member of the SFFANZ board and he has no official part to play in the administration of the Sir Julius Vogel Awards. Nevertheless, SFFANZ agrees with the opinions expressed in this article and would like to thank Simon for writing it.”

Alan Robson, SFFANZ President

Quiz Answers:

1. “Restoree” - noted for its strong heroine.
2. “Dragonflight” - made up of “Weyr Search”, together with “Dragonrider” and the unpublished “Crack Dust, Black Dust”.
3. Ruth—whose rider was Lord Jaxom of Ruatha.
4. The Red Star—actually a rogue planetoid.
5. A coffee-like beverage, made from the bark of a tree (rather like cinnamon).
6. Helva—a cyborg spaceship or “brainship”.
7. A crystal singer, able to mine crystal on Ballybran.
8. A unicorn
9. Hivers—hence the series title “The Lady and the Hive”.
10. Todd McCaffrey



Directed by George Miller
 Produced by George Miller, Bill Miller, Doug Mitchell
 Written by George Miller, Gary Eck, Warren Coleman
 Starring Elijah Wood, Robin Williams
 Hank Azaria, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Pink
 Sofia Vergara, Common, Hugo Weaving
 Richard Carter, Magda Szubanski
 Anthony LaPaglia
 Music by John Powell, Pink

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

For once, I didn't read the reviews before seeing the movie, mainly because Paul was pretty determined to see "Happy Feet Two". We also took a friend's four-year-old child who enjoyed it immensely and on that basis I can safely say that this is an excellent movie for little kids. Mumble is grown up and has children of his own—though he still has juvenile plumage which I found a bit odd. Also jarring was the appearance of a puffin, though that was soon explained as human intervention. Comic relief is provided by the krill Bill and Will, who get some excellent puns. Basically the plot revolves around a major subsidence of the Antarctic ice, causing the Emperor penguins to be trapped with no access to the sea, and facing starvation—and how they are saved. Bigger kids and adults will enjoy the music, and the dance sequences, which are lovingly animated and on the grand scale. But the message is garbled partly because they're trying to say too many things at once, and partly because the connection between the sinking of "Emperor Land" and global warming isn't as clear as it should be. That brings me to the same conclusion as the reviewers—this was an average movie when it could have been great. Oh, and the march of the elephant seals to "Rawhide".... Now, that was a movie moment.

Mistborn: The Alloy of Law

by Brandon Sanderson

Gollancz, pp325

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Now, you'll have to understand that I haven't actually read the original "Mistborn" trilogy, though I'm certainly encouraged to do so by this novel. The original trilogy was essentially medieval high fantasy, but Sanderson has rolled the clock for "The Alloy of Law". It's three hundred years later, and technology has advanced in the way it usually doesn't in fantasy novels. However, this book is not your typical Victorian Steampunk novel, having a much more Wild West feel. There are lots of guns, there are lawkeepers, and there train robberies. There is also the "magic" of Mistborn, which if you haven't read the other books, has more a flavour of psionics, or perhaps superpowers. Is this another case of science fiction in fantasy dress? I'm not sure. As for the book itself, there's plenty of action, some of it spectacular – there's even a running battle on top of a train... The heroes are complex enough to be both interesting and memorable, and the primary villain's motives are sensible and insane at the same time. As for the villain behind the villain... that really would be telling. Definitely worth reading.



No Humans Involved:

Women of the Otherworld 7

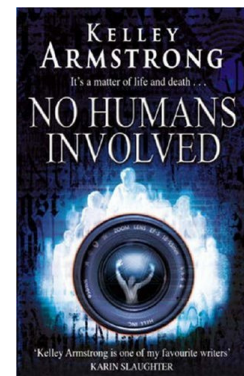
Kelley Armstrong

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Jamie Vegas is a celebrity necromancer, seeing dead people on TV and live shows. Aiming to get her own show, she joins two spiritualists on a TV shoot to raise the ghost of Marilyn Monroe. After finding real ghosts in the house, Jamie asks for help from werewolves, a half-demon, an angel or two and a dark witch. Ghosts are usually not a problem for Jamie, but these ghosts are children, and the underworld laws say that shouldn't happen. Jeremy, the alpha of the US werewolf pack, is quiet, serious and very self-controlled. He flies to LA to help out Jamie, and romance blossoms between them while investigating how humans have discovered how to use blood magic. Though Jamie does moan a bit about having no powers and needing to be rescued all the time, she's very capable and can look after herself while getting the job done. She comes to terms with her dodgy past and accepts the darker side of her supernatural abilities in this story. The sex scenes are a bit more descriptive than in the previous books, but are not graphic and fit well with the rest of the story. This is a paranormal suspense, with a bit of intrigue, a bit of action, scary killers, as well as comedic moments. This is an enjoyable book in the Otherworld series. It can be read as a standalone even though some characters are recurring. A definite must-read.



Blood Rights: House of Comarre Book 1

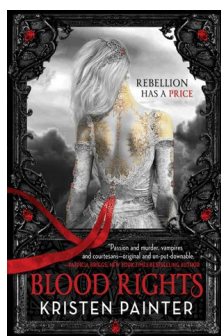
Kristen Painter

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Chrysabelle has been a blood slave to her patron for years. When he is killed, she is accused of his murder and the theft of a powerful artefact. She flees to the human world and her aunt Maris, a Comarre who killed her patron to achieve her freedom. While running from the murder charges, she stumbles across Malkom, a vampire who has been declared anathema. Chrysabelle enlists his help in stopping the evil, power-hungry Tatiana from hunting her down and using the artefact to start a war between humans and the supernatural. Malkom is a tortured soul. Cast out of vampire society, he is cursed to kill everyone he drinks from. Their names cover his body and their voices are always in his mind, taunting him. He wants Chrysabelle but can't trust himself near her – angst and violent passion ensue. Working together is the only way to get what they both want though. The Comarre are a race of people born to be companion and blood slaves for vampires (*And here's me thinking that "Comarre" is actually a city of dreams from a 1945 Arthur C. Clarke story—Ed*). They're blonde, pale, wear white and are decorated with gold tattoos. They are wealthy, collectively and individually, yet powerless. The world building is well done, set in 2060, and the world has changed, with the power some countries have now become very different. Some revelations I did not see coming—the ending was not what I expected and many loose ends are still there, leading in to the next book. This series has everything; urban fantasy, paranormal romance, a little SF with a splash of mystery. It's very well written, has great action scenes, and romantic tension between characters. The cover of this book is fabulous! If you're like me and judge books by the cover, you'll definitely pick this up.



Flesh and Blood: House of Comarre 2

Kristen Painter

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

The Covenant has been broken and the veil between humans and supernaturals is gone. More and more humans are discovering the existence of the othernaturals, and the threat of the inevitable war between them looms. After the murder of her mother, Chrysabelle escaped with the Ring of Sorrows and hid it. Tatiana is hunting her down and means to possess the ring. Dominic is mourning the loss of Maris. Doc is heartbroken. Fi has died and is determined to bring her back. Malkom is unswayable in his desire to protect Chrysabelle but he has a problem – she's not actually talking to him. He also has competition for Chrysabelle's attention. Creek is from an ancient sect of super human hunters, the



Kulai Mata. His goals are;

- return the Ring of Sorrows to his order
- protect Chrysabelle
- bed her

Not necessarily in that order. Chrysabelle has to choose between Mal and Creek – so chooses both. Ha! Little bits of information are scattered throughout, giving a deeper background and showing where the future books will go. There are many twists and turns in the plot, and the ending – all I'll say is I'm looking forward to reading the next book. This series just keeps getting better.

Bad Blood: House of Comarre Book 3

Kristen Painter

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Another fantastic book cover! The art is by Nekro again and depicts Chrysabelle so well. The covers of this series are awesome, tempting to those like me who judge a book by its cover. The book does not disappoint either, continuing Mal and Chrys's fight against Tatiana and the breaking of the Covenant. You need to have read the first two books in the series – Blood Rights and Flesh and Blood - or you'll be lost; they have so much information in them. This book has several storylines tightly woven together and the story told from the POV of those involved in each one. The barrier between humans and othernaturals has been broken and it is almost Halloween, the night their power is strongest. Creek finds the dead daughter of the mayor, drained from what looks like a vampire attack. Estranged from her mother, she was a Comarre wannabe and recently gave birth. Pressed for answers, Creek has to convince the mayor there are othernaturals and to cancel Halloween. The mayor and her werewolf bodyguards take refuge at Chrysabelle's to ride out the storm. Chrysabelle is still recovering from the loss of her Comarre markings (sigma), but eager to complete her mission to find her brother. She needs information from the Aurelian to do this, but needs her sigma to do this. To get them she needs sacred gold, not easy to come by. The only thing that might do is the Ring of Sorrows, hidden in the fae realm. Chrysabelle, Malkom, and Mortalis head to New Orleans to retrieve it, a city that has outlawed vampires. Caught up in fae politics, they can't get back to help defend New Miami during Halloween. Doc and Fi are finally free now the witch's spell has restored Doc's ability to shift to leopard form. But there's a catch, now the witch can see through Doc's eyes and control his body. And she wants Doc to bring her the Comarre wannabe's baby. Fi locks him in Chrysabelle's wine cellar during Halloween to keep him safe from the witch. Meanwhile Tatiana gains more power and finds new allies. She sends a Trojan horse to storm Chrysabelle's house at Halloween and retrieve the Ring of Sorrows. We learn more of Damian, her former comar who fled and found sanctuary in Chrysabelle's house. Clever plots, lots of action, sexual tension and vampires that don't sparkle. This series gets more intriguing with each book.



Side Jobs: Stories from the Dresden Files

Jim Butcher

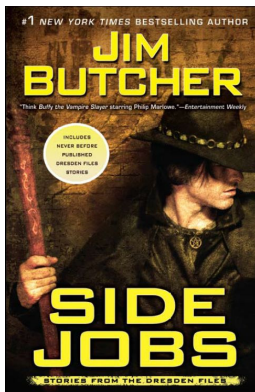
Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

A bunch of stories featuring Harry Dresden are in this book. Both unpublished stories and ones featured in an anthology are compiled in one place for the first time. Each story has a prologue explaining the origin and where they fit chronologically in the series. Many characters that appear in the Dresden world get a bigger role to play and you learn more about them. They are all fun stories, funny, comedic, serious, and the last is... well, it made me sniffle.

The first story, "A Restoration of Faith", takes place before "Storm Front" and shows Harry when he was just starting out as a detective. He searches for a little girl (Faith), a troll is involved, and he crosses paths with Murphy. Despite Jim Butcher protesting the story is unpolished, it is really good and gives a glimpse of who Harry is, and his character. "Backup" is a story from Thomas Raith's POV. He protects his brother from an old enemy, who is using Harry as bait. Thomas gets advice from Bob (the Skull), and saves the day, without his little brother knowing about it. Thomas also appears in "It's My Birthday Too", where Harry meets him at a mall where an RPG is taking place. "Aftermath" is the last, a novella from Murphy's POV, which takes place hours after the cliff-hanger ending of "Changes". No answers are given but there are plenty of teasers. It's more about how Murphy deals with the aftermath of "Changes". This is a must read for any Dresden fan, though you need to be familiar with the Dresden world to get these stories. They all have the action, comedy, and awesomeness of the books as well as minor side information that was not included, such as Gard's true nature. If you haven't read any of the Dresden Files, you could start with the first story then flip back and forth between this collection and the books, reading in proper sequence.



Lover Unleashed:

Brotherhood of the Black Dagger 9

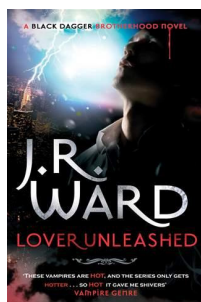
J R Ward

Published by Piatkus

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Payne and Wrath were sparring at the end of the last book, "Lover Mine", and she broke her back. The Scribe Virgin allows Wrath to take Payne from the "Other Side" to the Brotherhood mansion. Being blind, Wrath doesn't realise she's the twin of Vishous. Only when Doc Jane examines Payne and looks into a face with the same features as her hellren, does V know he has a twin. Payne has been cloistered on the "Other Side" for centuries, held immobile as punishment. Payne's back needs a surgeon with more skill than Doc Jane has, so she suggests Manny Manello. He's a human surgeon who had a thing for Doc Jane before she died and became a ghost, and V's shellan. He and Payne feel an



instant connection, though they face immense objections from V, and Wrath.

V and Doc Jane are a major sub-plot, with some unresolved issues coming out. The main one being V's need for BDSM. Butch helps with sorting their issues out. I had never seen the point of Doc Jane before but this book has made me really like her. There's a Quinn/Blay/Saxton sub-plot too. Quinn decides to stop living his destructive man-whore life and removes his piercings, while Blay is badly hurt fighting lessers. The Band of Bastards is also introduced, a band of warriors who destroy lessers, and anyone else who gets in their way. Their leader is Xcor, a son of the Bloodletter who is determined to avenge his father's death by killing Payne. The brothers have come over from the Old World with the intent of killing all lesser, overthrowing the king, and Xcor claiming the throne. There are also a series of brutal deaths that have nothing to do with lesser. Instead they're the work of a human serial killer. The book doesn't have too many different storylines, though you need read the previous books in the series to quickly grasp the various story arcs. These are not a teenager's vampires. The Brotherhood is rough, violent, raw, and very, very sexy. Definitely adult only.

Goddess of Love

P.C. Cast

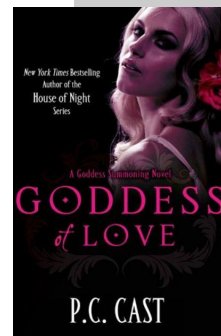
Published by Piatkus

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

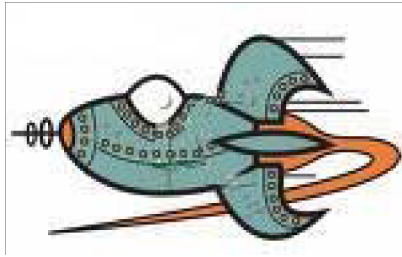
Venus, the Roman Goddess of Love, has been married to Vulcan, the Roman God of Fire, for many years. Bored, she visits Persephone, Goddess of Spring, in Tulsa for a girly catch-up and retail therapy. While shopping, she is summoned by a spell to help Pea Chamberlin, a shy, awkward interior designer with a crush on a gorgeous fireman, find love.

Griffin DeAngelo is a fireman and a sculptor. Having raised four sisters, he doesn't find settling down with one woman very appealing. Then he sets eyes on Venus and sparks fly between them. Vulcan has a limp and hides in caves so he doesn't have to face the disdain of the other Gods. He has a marriage in name only with Venus and is looking for a replacement so he can travel to the constellations. Seeing Pea, he is powerfully drawn to her. "Goddess in Love" is two stories in one, Venus and Griffin, Vulcan and Pea. Most of the characters were hard to like; Pea was whiny and clueless then suddenly became confident and seductive, Griffin was full of himself and self-important, Venus was shallow, and talked a lot about orgasms and divine genitalia. Vulcan was likeable and I wanted him to be happy. He doesn't get a lot of time in the book though - a shame as I really enjoyed the scenes from his perspective. One mistake was having the Roman Venus living on the Greek Mt Olympus—a glaring error that coloured my view of the book. As it's the fifth in the series, maybe it's explained in the first four? Not having read them I don't know, but I hear they're very good. The sex scenes are spicy and explicit, a surprise as in her other books sex is more implied. "Goddess of Love" is an excellent choice for a book that you don't need to concentrate on. Perfect for light reading when on holiday or sick.



UnCONventional 2012

**33rd New Zealand
National SF Convention
Auckland
1-4 June 2012**



**UnCONventional will be held at
the Surrey Hotel which is located
at 465 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.**

We can announce that our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark. Lorain is a familiar face behind the registration desk of many a con, and she who works behind the scenes has not escaped notice either! Our Guests of Honour have yet to be confirmed, but we are negotiating with a kiwi icon or two. We intend to use the convention to showcase the wealth of talent to be found in our own backyard.

**www.unconventional.sf.org.nz
Look for us on Facebook.**

**This year, we have selected two
worthy charities:
WSPA and Breast Cancer NZ.**



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This Month:

- BOOK None in January due to an excess of public holidays.
- SPACE Space on the Beach at St. Heliers
Saturday 4th February 4 pm onwards
Bring picnic to share
(if it rains retreat to Coen's at
1/32A Waimare Street)

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 16 September, 2010, 7:30pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road,
Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

February 17th-19th Battlecry 2012
ASB Stadium, Kohimarama, Auckland.

June 1-4th 2012 UnCONventional 2012
33rd New Zealand National SF Convention